The Lovely Bones Essay

***The Lovely Bones,*** a novel by Alice Sebold,is a moving story about a neighbourhood girl named Susie Salmon who was murdered on her way back from school. This book tells of what came after her murder and how it affected the lives of her family, from the perspective of Susie in Heaven.

Susie was walking home from school on December 6, 1973 while taking a shortcut through the cornfield near the school. When she is almost home she meets her neighbour, Mr. Harvey (who everyone thinks is a little odd), in the cornfield. Susie was worried about getting home, but Mr. Harvey told her that he had built a fort for the kids and that he wanted to show it to her. The fort that Mr. Harvey wanted to show her was underground. Susie was not suspicious because she was amazed about the mechanics of how he built it. Susie had walked unaware into where she would live the last moments of her life, before being murdered.

The part of the story above explains how, back in 1973, many people were not aware that people in their own community were capable of heinous crimes. Perhaps they saw the pictures of missing people on milk cartons, many who were never found, but it’s human nature to believe it only happens to others. People in Susie’s Pennsylvania neighbourhood thought that could never happen to people close to them, which is why Susie’s death so affected everyone. Some people today still think this. Susie’s dad Jack Salmon was suspicious of George Harvey and the way he acted. Susie’s dog, Holiday, also had the instinct that it was Mr. Harvey because he barked furiously whenever they walked by his house. I believe ***The Lovely Bones*** has helped raise awareness about tragedies like this and how it can happen anywhere, in any neighbourhood – even yours.

When Susie is in Heaven, she watches her family as they struggle to cope with her death. Her sister Lindsey was deeply affected by her sister’s death. After Susie was murdered, everyone at the school was staring at Lindsey, but they weren’t seeing Lindsey, they were seeing Susie. Buckley, Susie’s youngest brother, was told that Susie was at a very long sleep over with a friend. Buckley thought that that was the truth for a while, but he kept asking where she was. Eventually, one Christmas, his father explained to him where she had gone using a Monopoly board game. Buckley seemed to understand and he took it surprisingly well. Jack, Susie’s despondent father, was very torn about Susie’s death and was determined to have Mr. Harvey caught. He called the police and told them of his suspicion, but they would not listen because he had no real evidence. Susie’s mother was stricken by grief at what happened to her daughter. She was so overcome by grief; she couldn’t handle the pressure of her daughter’s death, so she fled her family to start a new life in California.

The paragraph above shows that the family of a murder victim can be devastated by not only the event itself, but by trying to regain a normal life after the event. ***The Lovely Bones*** gets the point across through Lindsey. As the remaining sister, comparisons to her dead sister make it hard for Lindsey to grieve herself. Father’s, who generally are more action oriented, need to be doing “something” to fix the situation. The need to find the killer can end up causing self-destruction because of the obsessive need to find answers. Susie’s mother ended up having her whole world destroyed. To cope, she had to simply leave – a move that also destroyed her family.

“Inside the snow globe on my father’s desk, there was a penguin wearing a red – and – white – striped scarf. When I was little my father would pull me into his lap and reach for the snow globe. He would turn it over, letting all the snow collect at the top, then quickly invert it. The two of us watched the snow fall gently around the penguin. The penguin was alone in there, I thought, and I worried for him. When I told my father this, he said, ‘Don’t worry, Susie; he has a nice life. He’s trapped in a perfect world.’” (pg.1)

The excerpt from the book above is one of the most important paragraphs in the book, because it is a metaphor for how Susie feels after she was murdered and was looking down and watching earth. She is trapped because she can’t be with her family on earth and it is a perfect world because she can have anything that she can imagine or wants except what she really wants most; to be with her family.